

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5661

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 16688

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, IT

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: GROUND HANDLING AND USER CHARGES

REF: ROME 16477

1. FURTHER TO REFTTEL, A HIGH RANKING ALITALIA OFFICIAL HAS CLAIMED TO EMBOFF THAT ALITALIA HAS IN ITS FILES WRITTEN REQUESTS FROM PAN AM AND TWA THAT ALITALIA TAKE OVER AIRPORT GROUND HANDLING SERVICES AT ROME. HE DID NOT EXPECT THIS WOULD HAPPEN SOON, HOWEVER.

2. IN FURTHER CONVERSATIONS WITH U.S. AIRLINE OFFICIALS, THEY STATED THEY HAD NOT TAKEN POSITION FOR OR AGAINST ALITALIA CONTROL OF SOCIETA AEROPORTI DE ROMA (SAR). ONE OFFICLA SAID, ON COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL BASIS, THAT HE PREFERRED ALITALIA CONTROL OF SAR FOR TWO REASONS: (A) ALITALIA WOULD AT LEAST BE CAPABLE OF COMPREHENDING FOREIGN AIRLINES PROBLEMS IN OBTAINING ADEQUATE GROUND HANDLING SERVICES WHEREAS SAR INCAPABLE OF SUCH COMPREHENSION--HENCE THERE WAS HOPE ALITALIA WOULD BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO FOREIGN AIRLINES NEEDS; (B) IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR FOREIGN AIRLINES TO RECOVER EVENTUALLY OPTION OF ARRANGING FOR THEIR OWN GROUND HANDLING-- A POSSIBILITY THAT WAS NIL AS MATTERS NOW STAND.

3. EMBOFF CAUTIONED U.S. AIRLINE OFFICIAL TO BE WARY OF
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BEING DRAWN INTO MAJOR BATTLE THAT APPEARS TO BE SHAPING UP DESPITE THEIR DESIRE TO REMAIN PUBLIC NEUTRAL AND WARNED THAT ALITALIA WAS CLAIMING IT HAD FOREIGN AIRLINES ON ITS SIDE. EMBOFF ADDED THAT, IF U.S. AIRLINES REALLY WISHED TO PRESERVE NEUTRAL STANCE, THEY SHOULD BE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL ABOUT GIVING ANYONE WRITTEN INDICATIONS OF THEIR REAL POSITIONS IF OTHER THAN NEUTRAL. HOLMES

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